

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 289

By Niceley

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Dr. William "Bill"
Sanders of Columbia.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. William "Bill" Lester Sanders, the creator of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) and a revolutionary education improvement advocate who influenced educational policy throughout America; and

WHEREAS, as the director of the Value-Added Research and Assessment Center at the University of Tennessee, Dr. Sanders spearheaded a landmark study that demonstrated the lasting effects of educational practices on future student performance; and

WHEREAS, as a result of this research, Dr. Sanders developed TVAAS, also known as the Educational Value-Added Assessment System, a method used to measure a district, school, and teacher's effect on student performance by tracking the year-to-year progress of students against themselves over their school career with various teachers' classes; and

WHEREAS, fellow educators have lauded TVAAS for revealing "more truths about teaching and schooling than any tool in education history" by producing data that exposed the liabilities of ineffective teacher preparation; and

WHEREAS, with his research serving as the foundation of the accountability system in Tennessee, Dr. Sanders became a national leader in value-added assessments, and his work is still vital to education-policy discussion across the country, having dramatically altered the way teachers assess students, principals assess teachers, superintendents assess principals, and school boards assess superintendents; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Sanders strongly believed that the purpose of all education is to provide more students with more choices in life, and his life's work was dedicated to enabling parents, educators, and lawmakers to better assess the effectiveness of educational practice; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Sanders believed that educational influence matters and teachers matter most; his position challenged decades of assumptions that student family life, income, or ethnicity have more effect on student learning, but he has been proven correct in his optimistic view that teacher effectiveness dwarfs all other factors as a predictor of student academic growth; and

WHEREAS, for his many achievements in the field of education, Dr. Bill Sanders was honored by the Education Commission of the States as the 2015 recipient of the James Bryant Conant Award, which is one of the most prestigious honors in the field and has been previously awarded to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, E.D. Hirsch, Fred (Mr.) Rogers, and U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander; and

WHEREAS, the son of Lester and Sara Sanders and a native of Bedford County, Dr. Sanders was a graduate of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UTK), where he was an active member of Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity; he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science in 1964 and a doctorate in statistics and quantitative genetics in 1968; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1972, Dr. Sanders created and led a statistical and consulting group for the Institute of Agricultural Research for the University of Tennessee system; for twenty-eight years, he worked with scientists to plan experiments and analyze the resulting data on research projects ranging from agronomy to physics; and

WHEREAS, one of his projects modeled the nutrient flow in the Peace River system in Florida, which research proved that the environmental degradation in the Gulf of Mexico was a result of the phosphate mining activity in Central Florida; other projects were as wide ranging as developing a forecasting system for Bike Athletic, improving forecasts for over 2,500 different inventory units, and developing a process that improved calibration of an invention that measured fiber properties; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Sanders was also an adjunct professor of statistics for the College of Business at UTK; and

WHEREAS, after his meritorious service to the State of Tennessee in developing TVAAS, Dr. Sanders served as the senior manager of Educational Value-Added Assessment Services at SAS Institute in Cary, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, his professional training caused Dr. Sanders to observe and question, and his goal was to learn something new every day; he was an avid golfer, quail hunter, and breeder of English setters; and

WHEREAS, although he enjoyed remarkable success in his profession, his family was the constant joy of Dr. Sanders's life; fitting his family genealogy within the broader context of the settling of his country and State filled many pleasant days; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Bill Sanders is survived by his wife, June Rivers Sanders; daughter, Sarah Sanders Teague, and her husband, Matthew Teague; son, Dr. William Gordon Sanders, and his wife, Reetu Gowdar Sanders; stepsons, Brian Lee Rivers and his wife, Tracy Blackwell Rivers, and Mark Evan Rivers and his wife, Angela Barrett Rivers; sisters, Sylvia Sanders Pinson and Mary Grace Curlee and her husband, David Curlee; cousin, Charlene Pickle Judd; and eight grandchildren, Ava Jean Teague, Locke Jameson Teague, Rohan William Sanders, Sonia Lucille Sanders, Evan Barrett Rivers, Rogan James Rivers, Dylan Reed Rivers, and Ewan Jude Rivers; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember this innovative scholar and scientist in educational policy; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Dr. William "Bill" Lester Sanders, reflecting fondly upon his legacy of groundbreaking educational research in creating the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family, colleagues, and many friends of Dr. Sanders.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.